

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A stereoscopic observation system comprising:
a stereoscopic optical unit provided with a pair of objectives for stereoscopic observation and optical devices corresponding to the respective objectives;
a stereoscopic camera connected to the stereoscopic optical unit, and ~~used~~ operable to pick up optical images formed by the optical devices, at least one of the stereoscopic camera and the optical unit serving as an instrument to be supported;
a support unit which supports the instrument; and
a rotation mechanism incorporated in the support unit, the rotation mechanism having a rotary shaft substantially parallel to an optical axis of the objectives, the rotation mechanism supporting the instrument such that the instrument can rotate about an axis of the rotary shaft;
the support unit comprising at least one joint portion and an engagement unit adapted to disengageably engage with the at least one joint portion, the joint portion adapted to allow a movement of the instrument when the engagement unit is mechanically disengaged from the joint portion, and the rotation mechanism comprising the rotary shaft operable to rotate even when the engagement unit is engaged with the at least one joint portion.
2. **(Currently Amended)** The system according to claim 1, ~~wherein~~ the rotation mechanism comprising a ~~has~~ means of a frictional resistance type which ~~applies~~ structured to apply a frictional force to the rotary shaft when the instrument is rotated, thereby limiting rotation of the instrument.
3. **(Canceled)**
4. **(Original)** The system according to claim 1, wherein the rotary shaft of the rotation mechanism is substantially coaxial with the optical unit.

5. **(Currently Amended)** The system according to claim 1, wherein the support unit incorporates ~~a plurality of an additional~~ rotation mechanisms similar to the first-mentioned rotation mechanism.

6. **(Original)** The system according to claim 1, wherein the optical unit is a stereoscopic endoscope.